Obtaining corroboration at all borders (in both NWFP and Balochistan) for returns to Baghlan and Kunduz is far more difficult. Returnees are identified as full families of men, women and children with household goods (beds, kitchen utensils, livestock and so forth.) If the family repatriating has sold all their household belongings (as do many refugees who must travel great distances to return home to northern Afghanistan), they are indistinguishable from local border traffic and hence not registered as refugees.

During 1991, a total of 7,940 families who encashed ration cards gave their destination as either Kunduz or Baghlan. It is interesting to note that the Kabul office of UNHCR distributed food assistance to 40,582 refugees who registered with the Government of Afghanistan and transited through Kabul "guest houses" en route home. On an average, about fifty percent of the Kabul guest house traffic originates from the northern provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan. Although UNHCR has no way of determining how many of these returnees were registered in Pakistan (and thus assisted through the encashment program), the fact that ration packs have been provided to a significant number of individuals returning to these two provinces is confirmation of an ongoing return to the north.

Afghans observed at all the major border crossings this year more often include women and children riding in trucks which are loaded down with household belongings and even, upon occasion, roof beams. A Quetta UNHCR team monitoring the Chaman corridor in late August reported that fifty-six of eighty families observed traveling toward Panjwai District in Kandahar Province were carrying gates, door and window frames and roofbeams. The larger family groupings observed are strong indications of more permanent return and would indicate a shift toward families that feel the migratory patterns of previous years are no longer necessary.

The routes of return are in constant flux as roads and trails are periodically closed off due to mujahideen and government troop movements, rumors of planned offensives and aerial bombardment by the government. Many of those who want to return, however, manage to find alternate routes once the decision to return is made. Hostilities aside, during 1991 there were few reported instances of serious harassment or obstruction of movement in the Northwest Frontier Province either enroute or at the border, although recent accounts from returnees in Afghanistan suggest that there may be difficulties on some routes.

Refugees using the Balochistan corridors, however, have reported experiencing considerable harassment. UNHCR border monitoring teams confirm these accounts. Refugees are paying tolls at numerous road blocks. Amounts vary from 50 to 500 rupees per truck per stop. Punishment for refusing to pay varies from long, slow searches of all the refugees' possessions to a number of reported instances of physical beating.

UNHCR field monitors observe that excessive levies and physical harassment decrease significantly when they are present. All of the field staff felt that intensified UNHCR monitoring of the border corridors would serve to protect those wishing to repatriate and thus remove one factor inhibiting return.

In-camp monitoring

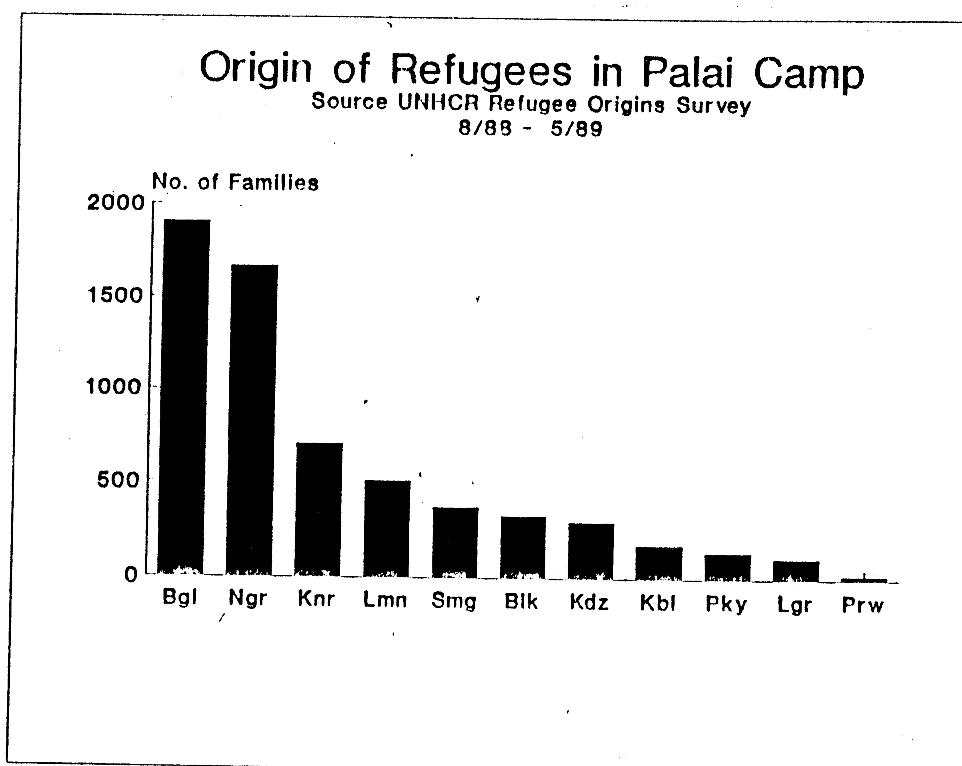
Information about refugee destination gathered at encashment centers and the border is now used to identify camps from which significant populations appear to be returning to priority districts/provinces. These camps are then visited to obtain evidence that Afghans did indeed actually depart for the destinations indicated on encashment forms and/or at the border. Results tabulated from monitoring done in two camps in the Northwest Frontier Province are instructive.

A Portrait of Palai

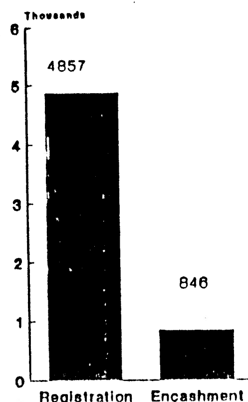
Palai Camp, Malakand Agency, is a large refugee village located 128 kilometers north of Peshawar. Established in the fall of 1982, Palai is divided into two administrative units called Palai 1 and 2. Incoming refugees were registered in Palai for the last time in 1986. In 1989-90, UNHCR revalidated registration cards for 2,679 families in Palai 1 and 2,178 families in Palai 2 for a camp total of 4,857.

Most of the refugees living in the refugee village come from the laboring and small farmer backgrounds. Of the registered refugees in Malakand Agency, the majority belong to the Safi, Akakhel, Shinwari, Durrani and Mushwani tribes.

THE UNHCR Refugee Origins Survey identified the 6,170 families (included both registered and unregistered) living in Palai in mid-1989 as coming from the following locations in Afghanistan:

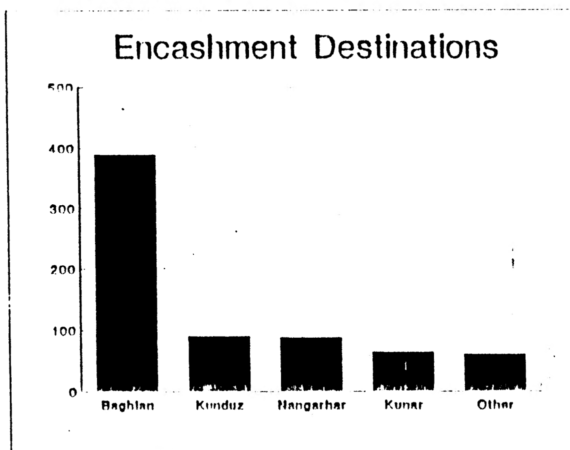


Palai offers standard services to its inhabitants and camp residents are not thought to be leaving in hopes of finding better services elsewhere. UNHCR and UNICEF have constructed water and sanitation systems. Although there are periodic disruptions in water delivery, the supply is generally adequate for the camp population. Two basic health units provide rudimentary medical care; education needs are met by 33 teachers assigned to five in-camp schools.



July 90 - 31 Dec 1991

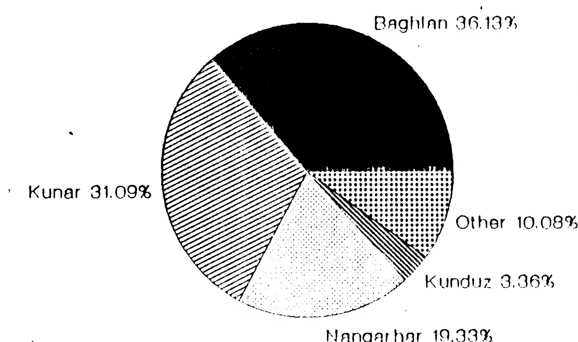
Encashment from the two Palai camps has been active since the beginning of the program in July 1990. From its inception through 31 December 1991, 846 families (4480 individuals) have turned in their passbooks. In Palai 1, the level was 9.22% and in Palai 2, 27.50% of the registered population. Camp 2 shows the highest percentage of encashment from among all camps in NWFP.



At the time of encashment, the refugees from Palai camps stated their intended destinations which are shown in the graph on the right. The destinations given accurately reflect the composition of the camp.

In August, 1991, 351 houses in the camp were found dismantled with roof beams, window and door frames removed and sold locally by the refugees. All of the houses had been vacated during the previous three months. Small surveys undertaken revealed that 56% of the departures could be verified as registered refugees who had encashed their passbooks (based on a sampling of 213 houses for which names were obtained from neighbors and checked with the registration role). A second survey was made which revealed that 67% of the families had departed for Afghanistan (based on a sampling of 138 houses asking neighbors the destination of the departed family).

Dismantled Houses in Camp



Out of 351 houses which have been dismantled in Palai by departing refugees, a survey of 119 families finds they originated from the provinces shown in the chart.

Study of the movements out of Palai Camps shows a strong linkage between encashment and return. The origin of refugees in Palai, the encashment levels from the camp, the existence of dismantled houses and interviews conducted in the camp and at the encashment site confirm the movement of refugees from Palai to destinations in Afghanistan. Evidence that the great majority have departed for Baghlan, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces is corroborated by border crossing information.

Reports of numbers of other abandoned houses have been received from camps around Kohat, Mansehra, Dir, North Waziristan, Abottabad, Peshawar, and Bajaur Districts in NWFP and in Kot Chanda in the Punjab. A UNHCR monitoring team from the Peshawar office found nearly 500 abandoned houses in the Hawaii camps in early 1992. The team interviewed teachers in one of the primary schools located near a group of 35 empty houses and were told that 103 students had left the school in question during September 1991. The teachers believed that most of the departed refugees had returned to districts in Nangarhar Province while smaller numbers had moved to Pakistani cities in search of employment.

Similar counting of dismantled houses has not been possible in Balochistan during 1991 because surveys undertaken in 1990 with a view to renumeration had left camp leaders distinctly hostile to any such future efforts. The 1990 counting of abandoned houses in some Balochistan camps found a range of 15 to 60% of the camp's population not present at the time of the survey.

Observation in Afghanistan

Estimating return based on encashment statistics excludes those returnees who were never registered as well as those who choose to go back without encashing. It may include, on the other hand, families that encashed but remain in Pakistan. It is impossible to realistically ascertain to which of these categories any encashed family really belongs. Based on NGO and UN agency reports describing missions undertaken during 1991 in the districts which were severely depopulated by the war, UNHCR staff believe that considerably more return has taken place than is suggested by encashment figures alone.

Nowhere is this more evident than in a comparison of encashment figures for Paktia Province with impressions gathered from mission reports. Summarized below are encashment figures for three districts of Paktia which are compared with UNHCR-estimated numbers of refugees who fled these areas.

	Refugee Outflow	Encashment to date
Janikhel	3394 families (100% pop.)	25 families
Chamkani	2862 families (80% pop.)	29 families
Sperah	1628 families (74% pop.)	30 families

Yet a DAACAR misssion to Sperah in September 1991 reported that "In...Sperah District adjacent to the Khost basin, most of the population appear to have returned. All fields are now under cultivation and houses are being repaired." (pp. 4 "A Short Profile on Khost", DAACAR.)

UNHCR staff who visited Chamkani District in November 1991 report that "according to the people of the area, most of the refugees have returned and have cultivated their land and repaired their houses." Monitors on this mission found the Chamkani bazaar full of customers and noted that "people have rebuilt or repaired their houses on a large scale and five tractors were seen plowing in district fields.

The same UNHCR mission also visited Janikhel District, one of the most untroubled areas of Paktia from a security point of view. Many refugees have therefore returned to the area as half-families and are occupied building homes and preparing land for cultivation. Returnees interviewed in Janikhel pointed out that the number of families needing housing and land has increased significantly since 1979 and some villages in Janikhel District have a current population greater than that present before the war. As a result of this population growth, refugees must not only rebuild their original homes but also need to finance the construction of new houses to accommodate their larger number. It is for this reason, the refugees claimed, that some family members have returned to Paktia to begin the work of reconstruction while others remain in Pakistan, drawing rations and seeking employment to fund their families' reconstruction efforts at home.

Return to Nangarhar Province also appears to be far higher than encashment would indicate. Khogiani District, home to more refugees from Nangarhar than any other district in the province, had an estimated pre-war population of 92,000 people, 90% of whom are thought to have fled to Pakistan. Some 895 families, representing about 5,000 people, have encashed their ration cards and returned to Khogiani. Yet in 1991 AVICEN conducted interviews with elders and commanders in the district and found an estimated population of 62,000 people, once again strongly suggestive that as with Paktia, many refugees from Nangarhar choose to return to Afghanistan while maintaining their registered status in Pakistan.

Population increases have been noted in southern Afghanistan as well. Recent visitors to the Shamaland and Darweshan areas of Helmand report a significant increase in the construction of new houses and the repair of old, abandoned homes. The chief of Darweshan Court of Justice stated in August that as many as 800 to 1,200 families had returned to Hazarjuft over the past ten months.

When UNHCR staff in Helmand asked commander Baridad of Shamalan why refugees were returning to Helmand in such increased number now, Baridad replied that "the scaling down of refugee ration entitlement(s) is making (things) difficult for many refugees to stay in Pakistan....The food reduction has brought their staying power to nearly nil."

A third of all refugees who have encashed their ration cards give Baghlan and Kunduz as their destination. NGO missions to these two northern provinces confirm that the key districts from which refugees fled are significantly repopulated with considerable economic activity evident to the passing observer. Harvests in both provinces in the last two years have been good and refugees bound for Kunduz and Baghlan interviewed at the border express confidence that they can support themselves once home.

UNHCR plans to undertake systematic surveying in key districts in six of the nine priority provinces during 1992 to track more rigorously the extent of return and to assess reconstruction needs that impede these areas' ability to absorb the remaining population still in the refugee camps.

During most of 1991, the decision to return was made on an individual family, rather than tribal, basis. In the last few months, however, UNHCR has received an increased number of requests for assistance from elders representing larger groups. Late this summer, one hundred and thirty families encashed their passbooks and returned to Helmand, accompanied by UNHCR staff who oversaw the transportation of their roofbeams and belongings from their refugee camp back to their home village of Deshu. Tents and small agricultural implements were also provided.

A few weeks later, fifty-one families accepted similar help in returning to Kandahar. Since these experiments with group-assisted return began, another 800 families have approached UNHCR staff to inquire whether such assistance could be made available to them. UNHCR staff continue to watch for large groups of families banding together to return as this may be an interim stage before larger group movements commence next spring.

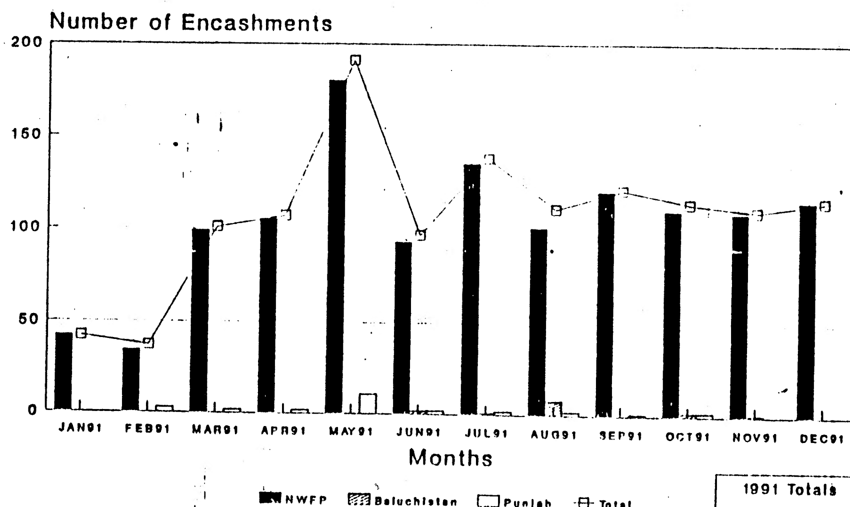
Conclusions

Monitoring during 1991 has established a correlation between encashment and actual return to Afghanistan. Although regional variations among the Balochistan, Northwest Frontier and Punjab Province camps affect data gathered in varied manners, encashment from all three areas show a slow but significant increase of return to target districts in three (Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Helmand) of the nine high priority provinces of Afghanistan. Although not increasingly monthly, return to Kunduz and Baghlan continues at a substantial and steady rate.

Return to Afghanistan remains piecemeal and sporadic. In the absence of an overall peace accord agreed to and respected by all parties, local conditions will continue to dictate patterns of return. Although actual fighting may cease in any given district or village, ongoing strife in adjacent territories can cut potential returnees off from traditional markets, sources of water, transport routes - all the conditions which make economic survival possible.

One year ago, repatriation was a taboo subject for public discussion, and did not seem to be an actively considered option by most refugees. But repatriation is now clearly and openly on the agenda and viewed as a real option. The decision now facing Afghan refugees is increasingly less whether to return home but when.

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : PAKTIA



(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Total Jul90 Through Dec91: 1909
WEN07.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	1243
Baluch.	0014
Punjab	0027
TOTAL	1284

PAKTIA PROVINCE

1979 Population: 484,023

1989 Population Projected: 601,694

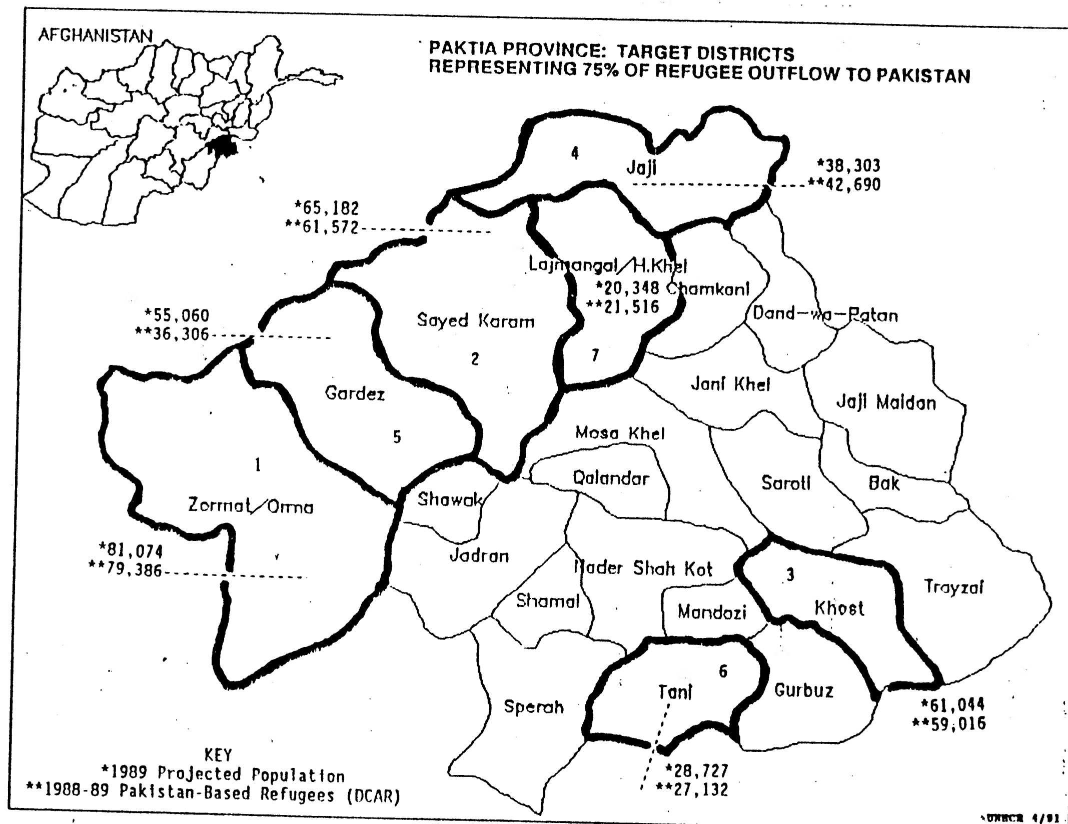
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR): 433,159

Refugees as % of '89 Pop.: 72%

Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan: 16%

Year Maximum Emmigration: 1979

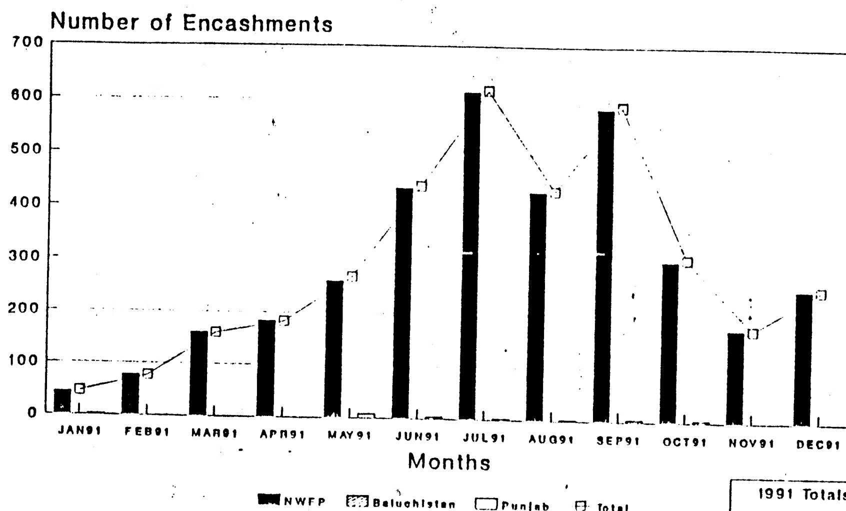
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91: 1909



PAKTIA ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91		as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Zormat/Orma	46	251	5. Gardez	87	149
2. Sayed Karem	19	73	6. Tani	41	52
3. Khost	247	545	7. Lajmangal/ H.Khel	0	7
4. Jaji	15	121			

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Stat. : NANGARHAR

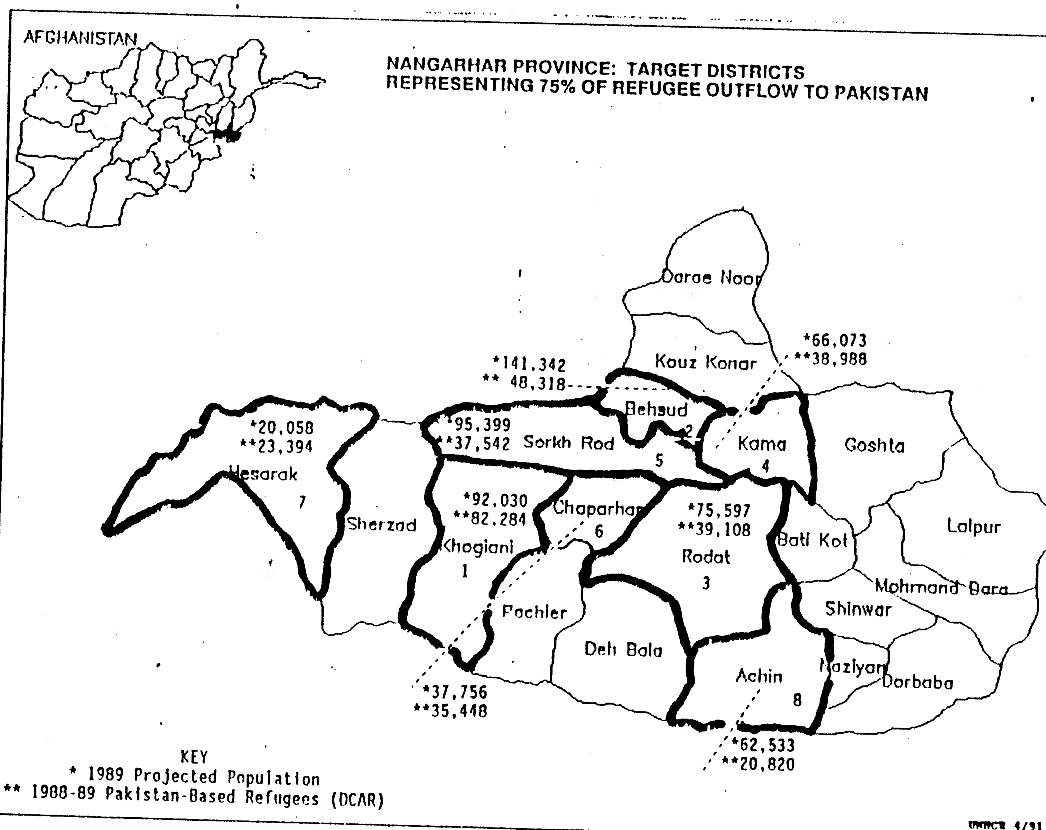


(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Totals Jul90 Through Dec91: 4200
WEN08.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	3516
Baluch.	0000
Punjab	0028
TOTAL	3544

NANGARHAR PROVINCE

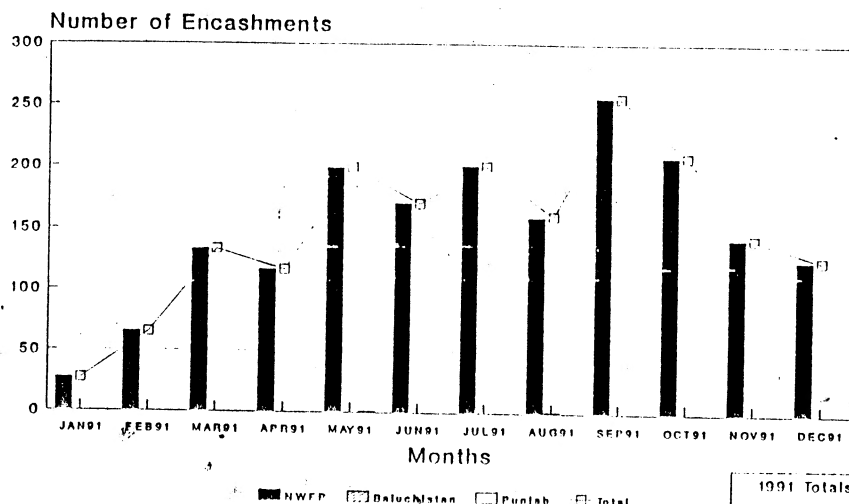
1979 Population:	745,986
1989 Population Projected:	927,343
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR):	425,106
Refugees as % of '89 Pop.:	46%
Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan:	15.8%
Year Maximum Emmigration:	1979
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91:	4200



NANGARHAR ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91		as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Khogiani	155	975	5. Sorkh Rod	37	266
2. Behsud	4	403	6. Chaparhar	54	257
3. Rodat	103	421	7. Hesarak	14	73
4. Kama	69	504	8. Achin	42	137

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : KUNAR



(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Totals Jul90 Through Dec91: 2926
WEN10.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	1799
Baluch.	0001
Punjab	0001
TOTAL	1801

KUNAR PROVINCE

1979 Population: 250,132

1989 Population Projected: 310,942

Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR): 172,506

Refugees as % of '89 Pop.: 55%

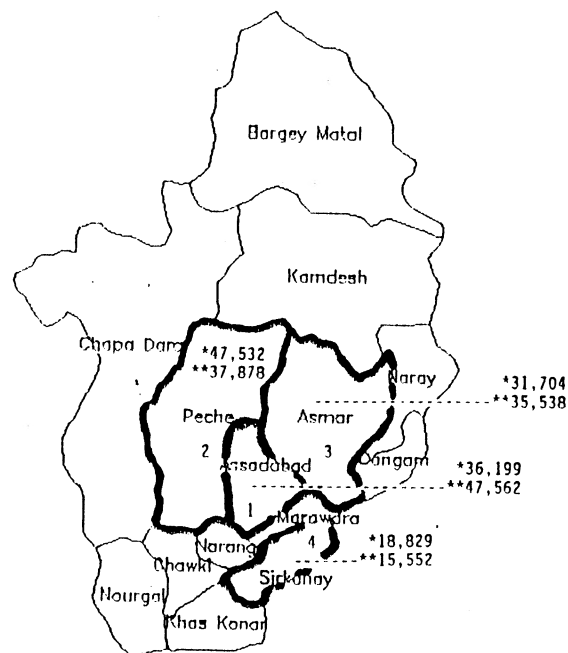
Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan: 6.4%

Year Maximum Emmigration: 1978-80

No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91: 2926

KUNAR PROVINCE: TARGET DISTRICTS REPRESENTING 75% OF REFUGEE OUTFLOW TO PAKISTAN





KEY
* 1989 Projected Population
** 1988-89 Pakistan-Based Refugees (DCAR)

UNHCR 4/91

KUNAR ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91		as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Assadabad	255	538	3. Asmar	409	1101
2. Peche	235	588	4. Sirkanay	9	36

REPATRIATION REPORT 1991

FOREWORD

Sources for this Repatriation Report include UNHCR OCM Pakistan field monitoring mission reports, Afghan Field Monitors' Reports, reports from UN and NGO missions to Afghanistan, interviews with UNHCR and NGO field staff, and statistics collected from the Afghan-Pakistan border crossings and from the refugee camps in Pakistan by UNHCR monitoring staff. Statistics from the Repatriation Grant Program provided the "hard numbers".

Population statistics used in this report are taken from the Government of Afghanistan 1978-79 census. Extrapolations from the census were used to obtain 1989 populations. Statistics of refugee numbers in Pakistan are from the UNHCR Refugee Origins Survey completed in May 1989.

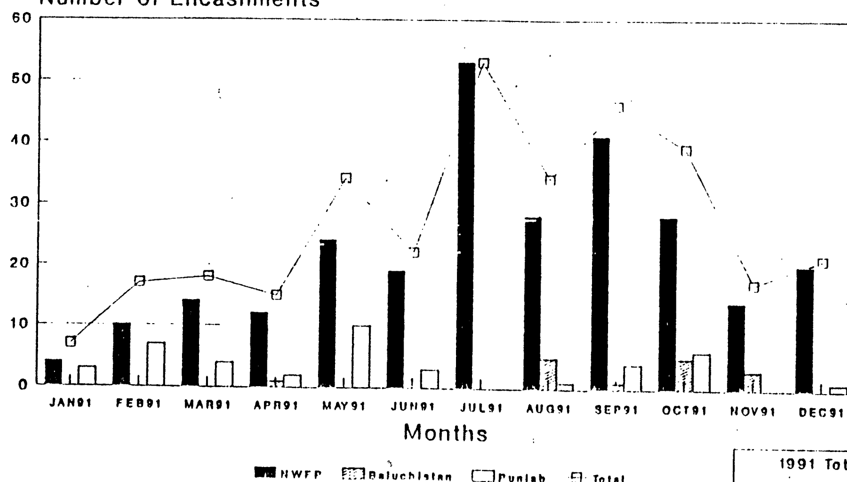
Numbers presented in this report obtained from the Repatriation Grant Program, the border crossings and in-camp monitoring show return to all provinces in Afghanistan. Uncertainty of access, the huge amount of territory that must be covered, and limited staff, however, led UNHCR to focus in-country monitoring on the nine provinces of Afghanistan which produced more than 83% of those who took refuge in Pakistan. (See Figure 1 on page 2.) This targeting is for monitoring purposes only and does not preclude assistance going to any area of Afghanistan where refugees are in need.

A note of caution: statistics on actual repatriation are estimates and should be treated as such. Exceptions abound for most generalizations offered. Apart from the encashment figures, statistics collected inside Afghanistan and in the camps indicate orders of magnitude and are informative primarily for what they tell us about trends.

This report was prepared with the assistance of UNHCR Repatriation staff and Afghan field monitors in Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad.

Wendy Batson
Repatriation Consultant
UNHCR Islamabad
1 March 1992

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : LOGAR



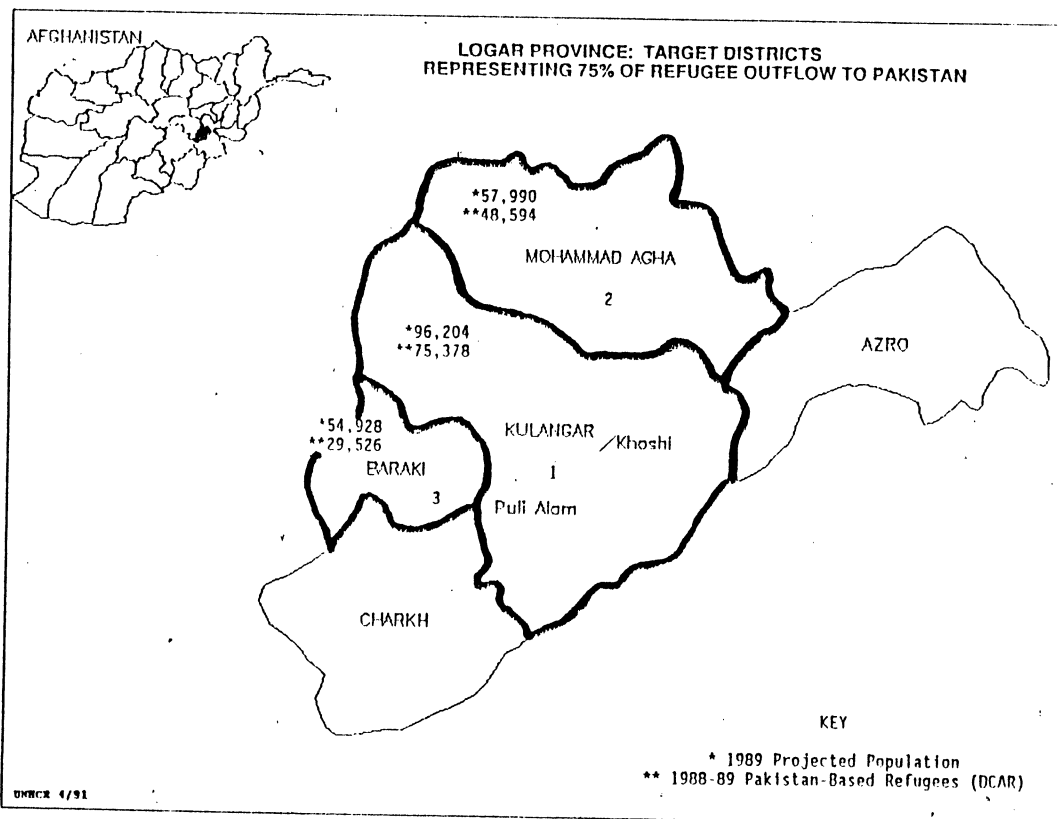
NWFP · Baluchistan · Punjab · Total

(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Total Jul90 Through Dec91: 552
WEN05.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	267
Baluch.	015
Punjab	041
TOTAL	323

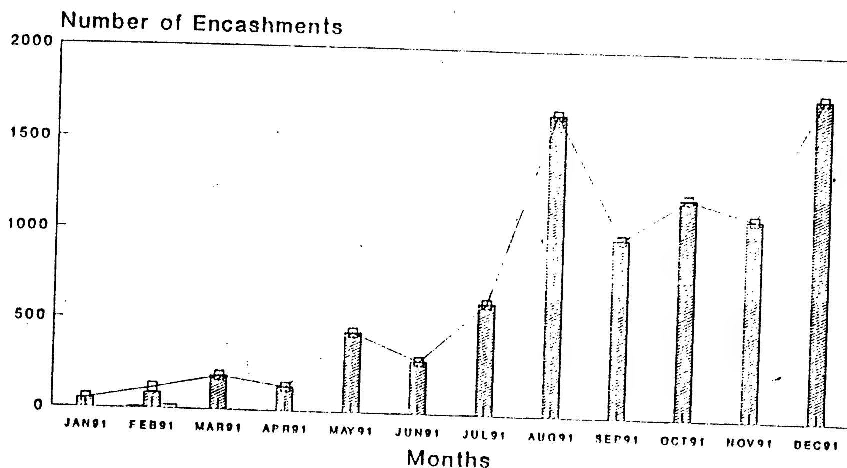
LOGAR PROVINCE

1979 Population:	216,303
1989 Population Projected:	268,888
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR):	176,382
Refugees as % of '89 Pop.:	66%
Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan:	7%
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91:	552



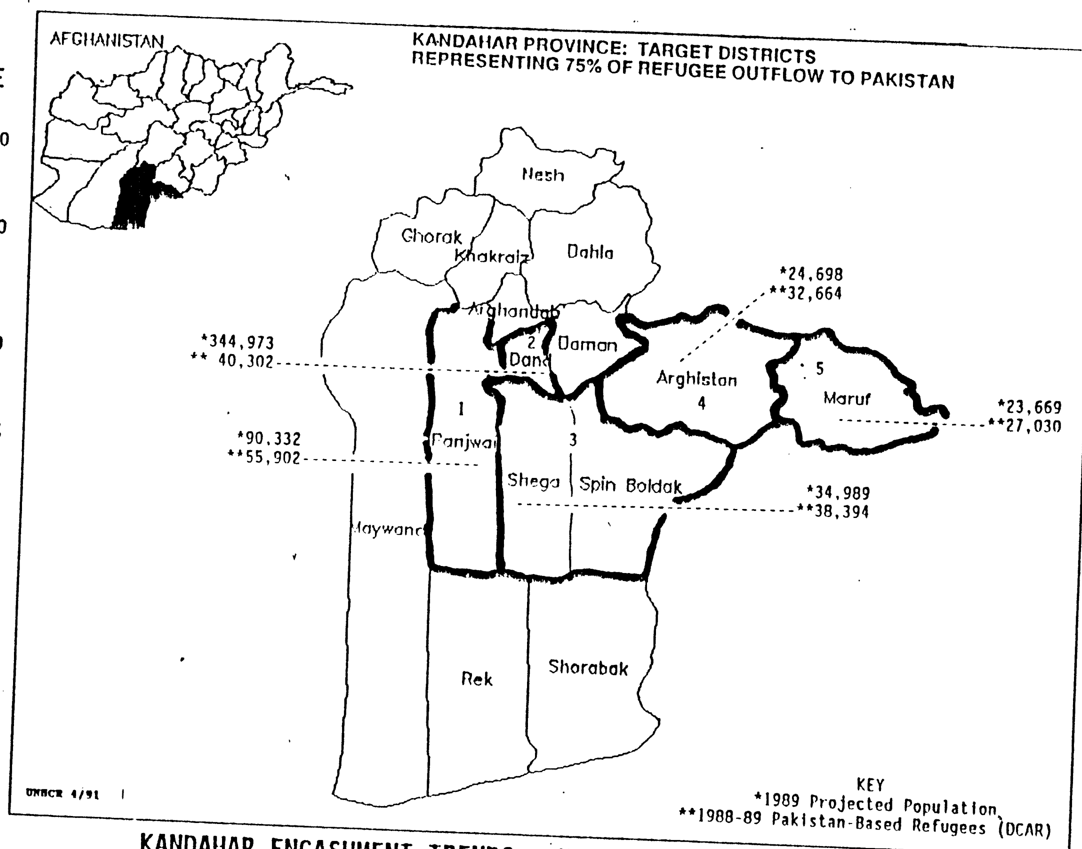
LOGAR ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Kulangar	21	58
2. Mohammad Agha	151	233
3. Baraki	25	117



KANDAHAR PROVINCE

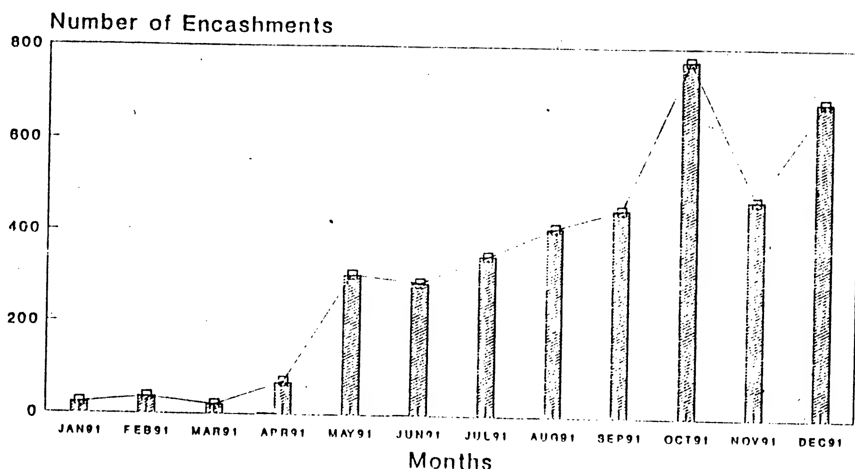
1979 Population:	575,000
1989 Population Projected:	714,700
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR):	239,000
Refugees as % of '89 Pop.:	34%
Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan:	9%
Year Maximum Emmigration:	1980
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91:	11314



KANDAHAR ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Panjwai	798	2362
2. Dand	431	2167
3. Shega/ Spin Boldak	441	1897
4. Arghistan	251	1415
5. Maruf	148	1201

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : HELMAND



NWFP Baluchistan Punjab Total

(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Total Jul90 Through Dec91: 4505
WEN23.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	0007
Baluch.	3860
Punjab	0000
TOTAL	3867

HELMAND PROVINCE

1979 Population: 517,645

1989 Population Projected: 643,490

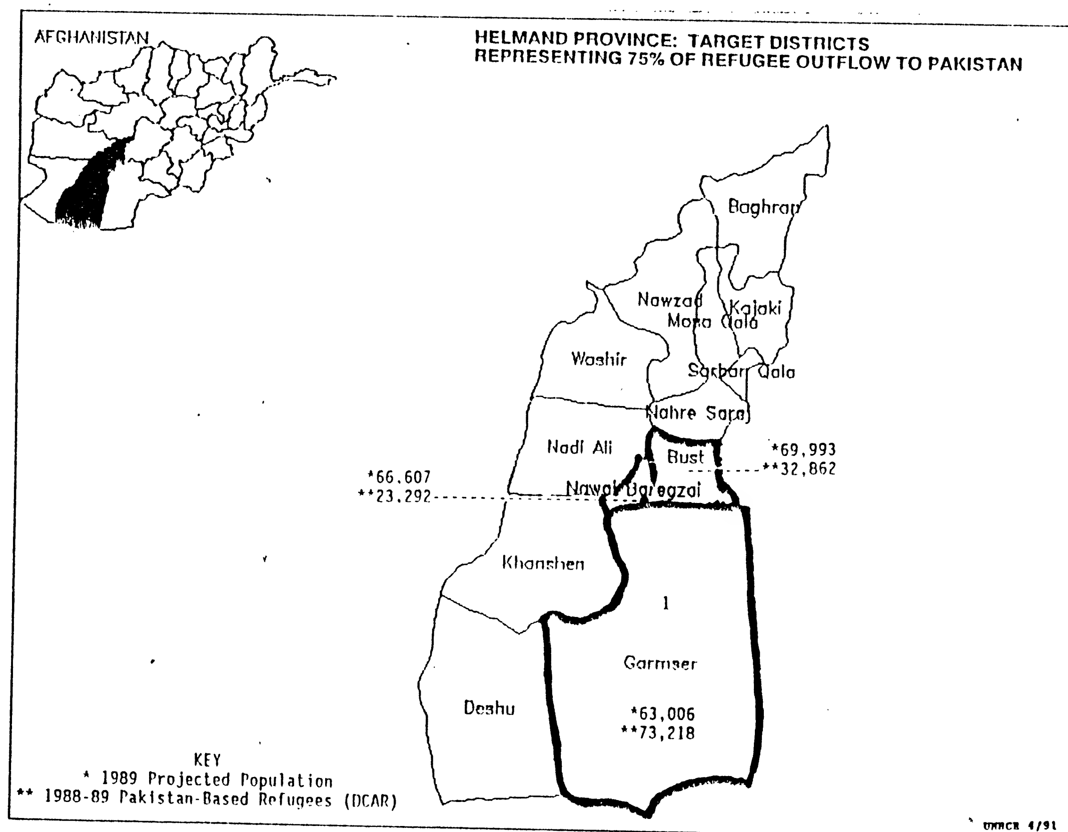
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR): 174,096

Refugees as % of '89 Pop.: 27%

Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan: 7%

Year Maximum Emmigration: 1980

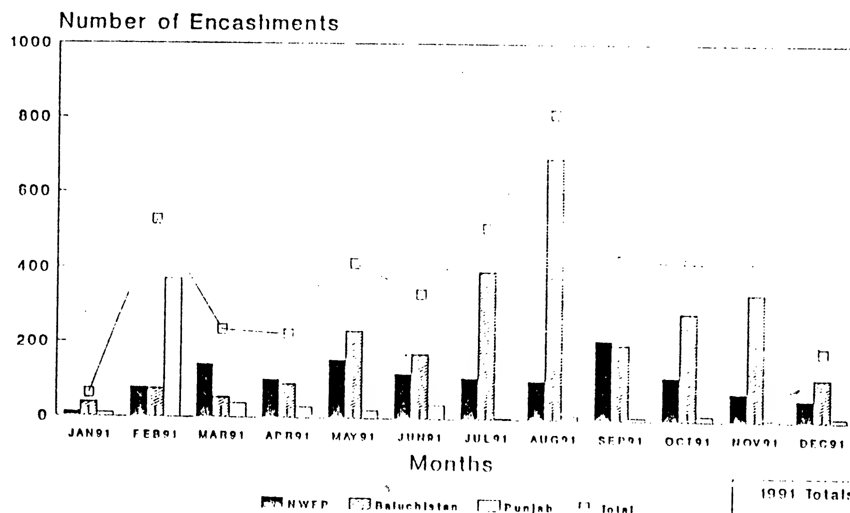
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91: 4505



HELMAND ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Garmser	127	1563
2. Bust	83	572
3. Nawai Baregzai	122	1062

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : KUNDUZ

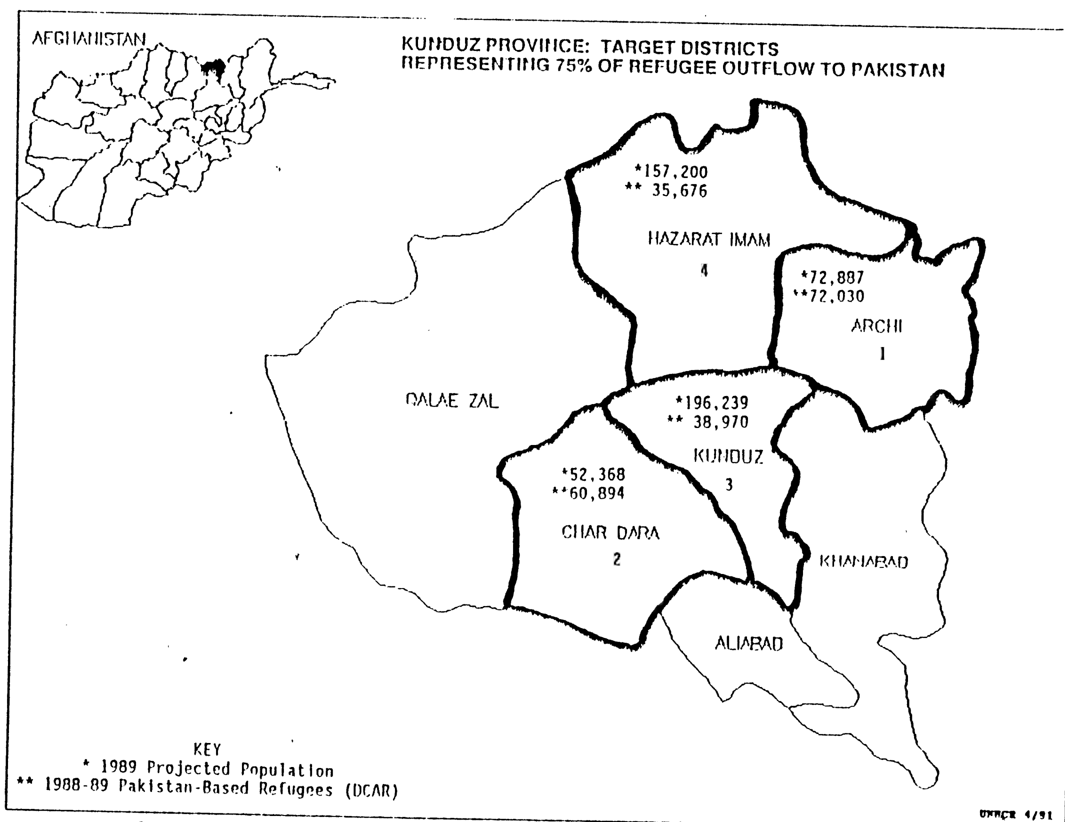


(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Total Jul90 Through Dec91: 7504
WEN14.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	1297
Baluch.	2702
Punjab	0569
TOTAL	4568

KUNDUZ PROVINCE

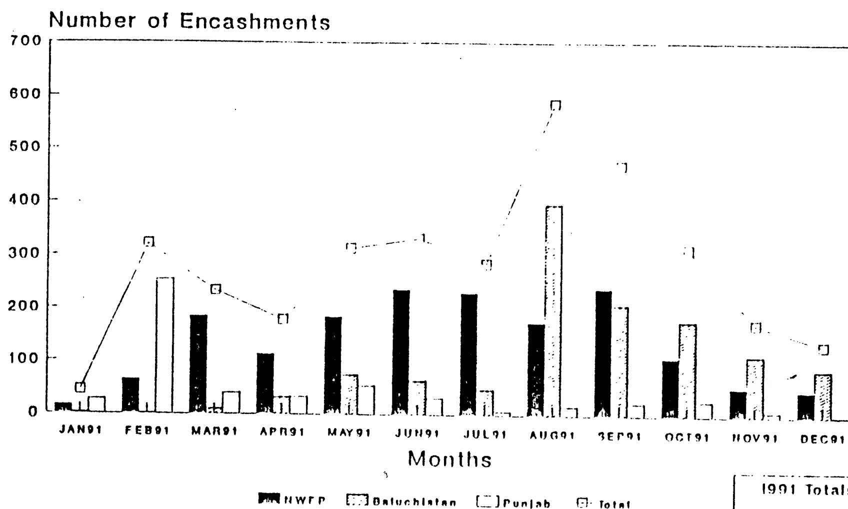
1979 Population:	555,437
1989 Population Projected:	690,469
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR):	240,060
Refugees as % of '89 Pop.:	35%
Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan:	9%
Year Maximum Emmigration:	1984-85
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91:	7504



KUNDUZ ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91		as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Archi	554	1546	3. Kunduz	401	1123
2. Chardara	1387	2345	4. Hazarat Iman	174	510

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : BAGHLAN

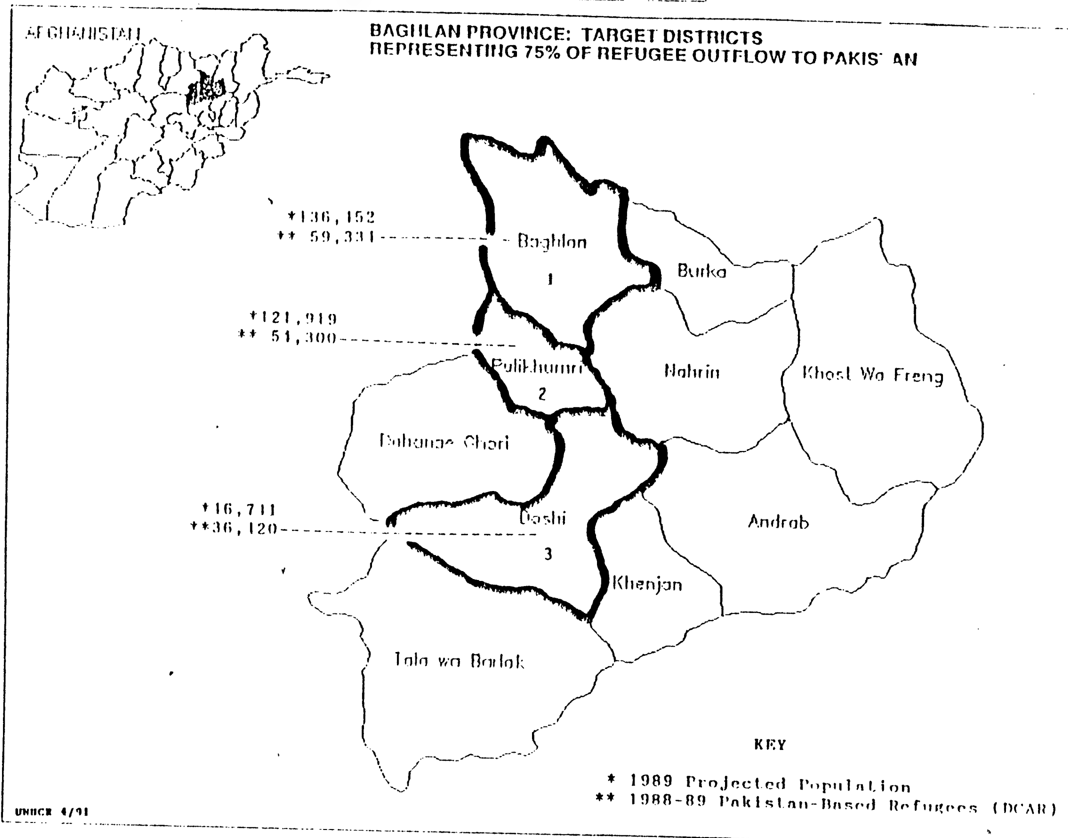


(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Total Jul90 Through Dec91: 5991
WEN13.CHT

1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	1639
Baluch.	1210
Punjab	0523
TOTALS	3372

BAGHLAN PROVINCE

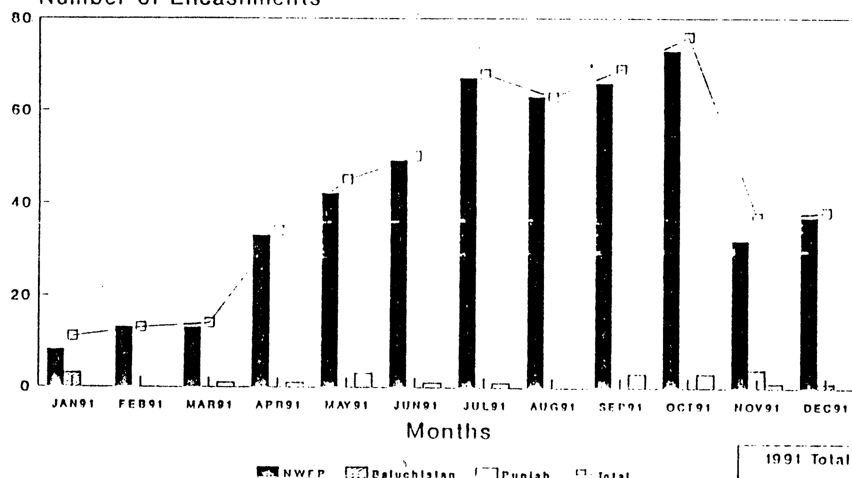
1979 Population:	493,882
1989 Population Projected:	613,950
Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR):	180,900
Refugees as % of '89 Pop.:	29%
Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan:	7%
Year Of Maximum Emmigration:	1984-85
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91:	5991



BAGHLAN ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Baghlan	1210	3037
2. Pulikhumri	985	2073
3. Doshi	200	423

REPATRIATION GRANT PROJECT
Monthly Destination Statistics : KABUL



1991 Totals	
N.W.F.P	496
Baluch.	008
Punjab	014
TOTAL	518

(Deregistration Figures)
Cum. Total Jul90 Through Dec91: 635
WEN01.CHT

KABUL PROVINCE

1979 Population: 1,373,572

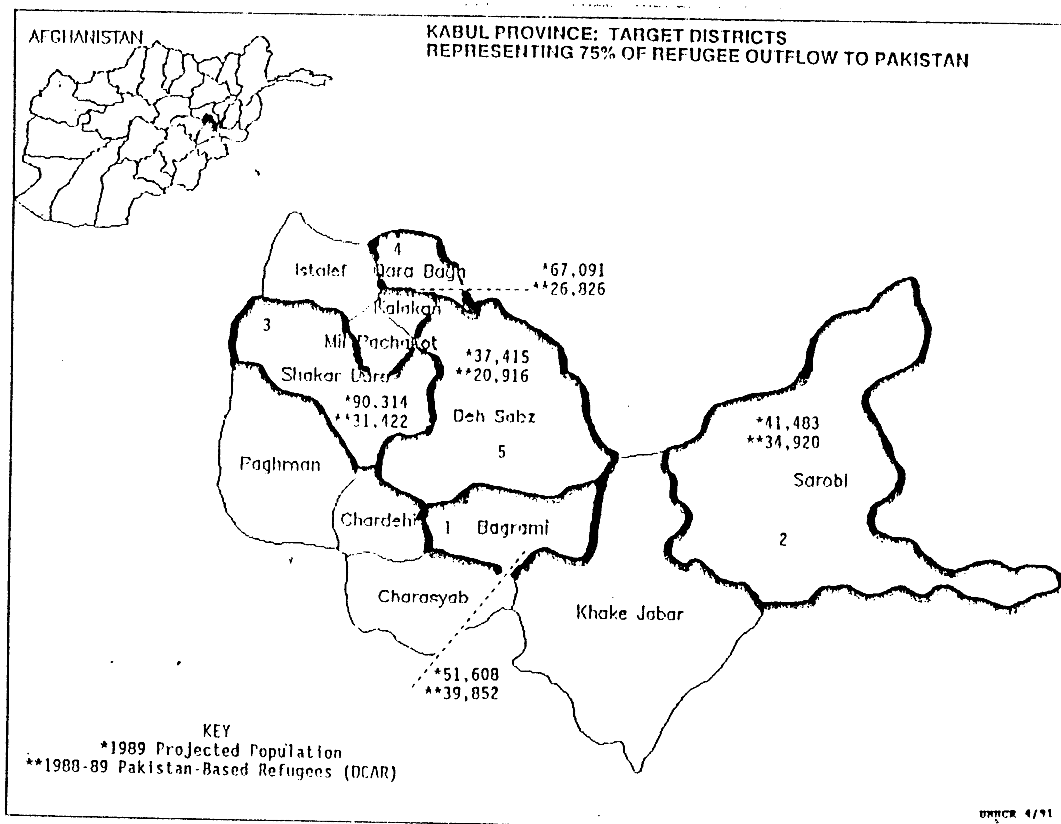
1989 Population Projected: 1,707,501

Refugees in Pakistan as of 5/89 (DCAR): 204,462

Refugees as % of '89 Pop.: 15%

Refugees as % of Total Refugees Pakistan: 8%

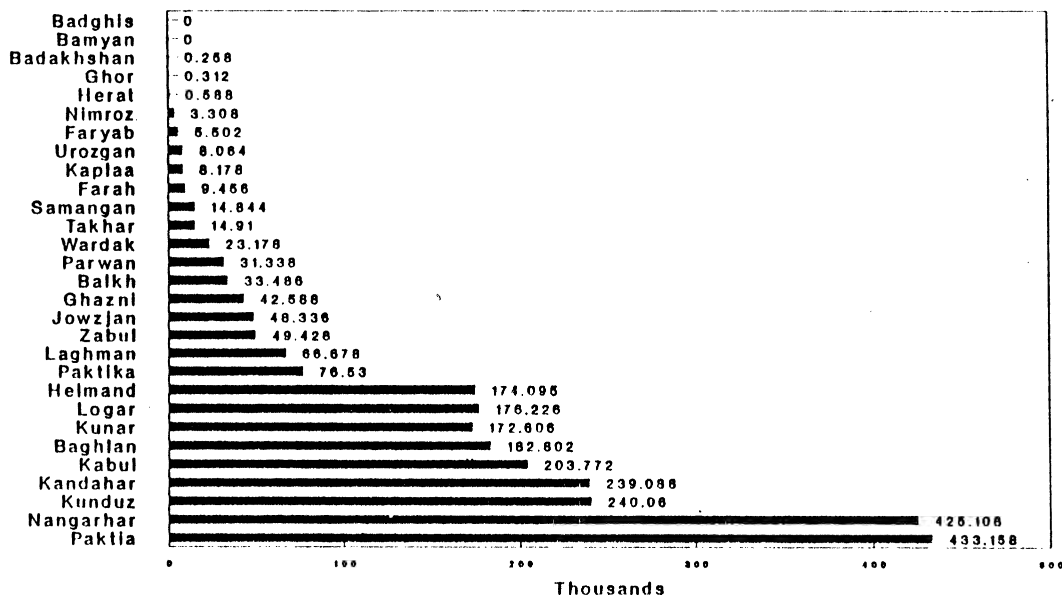
No. Ration Cards Encashed 31/12/91: 635



KABUL ENCASHMENT TRENDS: KEY DISTRICTS

	as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91		as of 3/1/91	as of 31/12/91
1. Bagrami	14	95	4. Qara Bagh	12	87
2. Sarobi	17	85	5. Deh Sabz		93

PROVINCE OF ORIGIN OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN
DCAR ORIGINS SURVEY



Total Surveyed Population of Refugees in Pakistan as of 6/89:	2,683,968*
Estimated Number of Refugees from nine target provinces:	2,246,814
Estimated Number of Refugees from other Provinces:	437,154

Figure 1

UNHCR's mid-1989 survey of the origins of Afghan refugees in Pakistan provides information on the approximate number of refugees in Pakistan from each province and district of origin. It is thus possible to rank provinces and districts according to their potential for refugee return. The nine Afghan provinces listed at the bottom of Figure 1 account for more than 83% of the refugees who fled to Pakistan. The survey also identifies districts within each province which are typically home to 75% or more of the people who fled the province in question.

UNHCR monitoring has focused primarily on tracking repatriation trends in target districts within the nine priority provinces. Given the preponderance of refugees from the provinces of Nangarhar and Paktia, particular attention has been paid to any signs that people from these provinces have begun to return home.

*Based on 1989 UNHCR/WFP estimates of number of refugees present in refugee villages.

1991 AFGHANISTAN REPATRIATION REPORT

Introduction

Unsettled conditions in Afghanistan have made each Afghan refugee's decision about whether to return home a difficult one. Despite the final withdrawal of Soviet forces in February 1989, armed conflict between the Government and the mujahideen as well as internecine mujahideen struggle have continued. Although the war is probably less destructive of life and property than before 1989, the provinces and districts from which the great majority of refugees come are still among the most hotly contested. A marked increase in military activity during 1991 in many of the major areas of refugee origin of eastern Afghanistan led to significant disruptions along traditional routes of return as well as increased insecurity in home territories.

The continuing conflict has adversely affected UNHCR's ability to monitor return. Access to relevant parts of Afghanistan for UNHCR staff was impossible because of security concerns for significant periods of 1991. Violence within Afghanistan as well as along the border areas has hampered border monitoring. Nor has monitoring in the refugee villages been easy: access to Balochistan camps has been uncertain, dependent on a complex and changing political environment.

Obstacles notwithstanding, UNHCR increased efforts to monitor and document refugee return in 1991. The monitoring program has focused on four areas: the refugee village, the encashment locations, border crossing points and villages in Afghanistan. Considerable effort has been made to obtain data showing correlation between repatriation grant statistics (which provide the most precise data available) and actual return to Afghanistan.

Arrivals and Departures: A 1991 Summary

Far more Afghans went home in 1991 than fled Afghanistan even through there was considerable military activity in the districts from which most of them originate. UNHCR estimate that at least 200,000 refugees returned home during 1991, most of them to key districts in six of the nine priority provinces listed in Figure 1.

Repatriation to Baghlan and Kunduz continued at a pace similar to that in 1990 while return to Nangarhar, Kandahar and Helmand increased significantly. Refugees from Paktia continued to go home in spite of increased military activity at Khost and Gardez. Security constraints militated against return to Logar and Kunar and fewer Afghans went back to these two provinces than did in 1990.

When asked by encashment clerks or UNHCR monitors why they were returning this year, refugees most often replied that rations in the camps were insufficient, that no jobs were available locally, that conditions had improved in their villages of origin, and that the political parties were less vociferous in their opposition to return. The reduction in food assistance to refugees in the camps is the most oft-stated reason for return given at encashment centers and at the border. In January, 1991, a planned reduction of 20% per person was implemented. Irregular distribution of wheat in the camps during 1991, however, actually created an overall reduction of 30-40% from the previous year.

Refugees also cite deteriorating security conditions in the Balochistan camps as a factor. Eighty Uzbek families left Pir Alizai in May complaining of robbery and intimidations by Pushtuns. Similar complaints are coming as well from Pushtuns interviewed at encashment centers or at the border. In a report written last April, Quetta UNHCR staff quote a refugee as saying, "If many refugees leave camp, it would affect those of us who remain because ruins of empty houses will be havens for thieves. In Karez Camp, for every occupied house there are three or four abandoned."

There are also reports of local and regional commanders encouraging return to areas under their control, particularly in the North. Encouragement by northern commanders partially explains the high level of encashment by refugees from Kunduz and Baghlan. Mullah Rasul Akhunzada of the Harakat Party in Helmand Province is rumored to have put out word that if refugees from Helmand do not return soon, Harakat will redistribute their land to those who did.

Security in the area of origin remains the principal factor in the decision to return. Low levels of repatriation to Logar and western Paktia during 1991 can be directly attributed to continued conflict. Although Kunar Province has received substantial amounts of assistance from the international community and has produced an agricultural surplus for several years running, movement to this province remains low in relation to the overall caseload due to intermittent and severe inter-party strife.

New Arrivals in Pakistan

The mujahideen siege of the town of Khost in Paktia Province produced the largest group of new arrivals. An estimated 20,000 people fled to Pakistan before the town's seizure by the mujahideen on the 31st of March.

Other new arrivals to Pakistan in 1991 usually came in small groups of three to five families. Reasons given most often for leaving included Government bombardment, internecine conflict amongst the mujahideen (Kunar, Kandahar, Helmand and Logar) or difficulty of living conditions in their villages. Families from Helmand Province most often cited destitution, famine, lack of water and general inability to make a living as reason for leaving. Conscription campaigns by mujahideen or the Government occasionally drove people out.

Overall numbers, however, have remained small and UNHCR staff estimate a total new caseload of 25,000 people including the refugees from Khost. Although most of those who fled remain in refugee villages in Pakistan, recent visits to Khost by NGO staff report return in significant numbers as mujahideen military commanders have lifted an earlier ban on repatriation to the town. Return to Khost has just begun on an individual basis and figures are an approximation only.

In the last three months of 1991, several thousand families passed through Pakistan en route to Iran from some areas of the Hazarajat, long a food deficit area. An unusually harsh combination of flooding last spring, snow during the final weeks before harvest and rust-afflicted wheat at harvest made this year's exodus far larger than usual. According to the Quetta office of the Afghan Shi'ite party, Hezb-I-Wahdat, 60 to 70 thousand people transited through Quetta on their way to Iran. This estimate is confirmed by the Iranian authorities. Other estimates from NGOs, UN staff, and government observers on both sides of the border range from 10,000 to 100,000 persons. OXFAM-UK, which has ongoing project work in the Hazarajat, believes the departures have been in the range of 10,000 to 12,000 individuals.

In mid-December, Quetta UNHCR staff reported that Hazara families continued to arrive in Quetta at the rate of fifty to one hundred families a day but that the Hezb-I-Wahdat had ceased issuing travel certificates for entry to Iran pending the reopening of the frontier. By early January, 1992, however, the exodus had slowed considerably. On January 12th, the Quetta UNHCR office sent an assessment team to the Iran-Pakistan border and found only nineteen families awaiting entry into Iran. Iranian authorities are allowing refugees from the Hazarajat to enter in small groups of approximately ten families at a time, giving priority to those who are sick. Refugees waiting at the border expected to be permitted to cross within days. UNHCR staff in Quetta report no additional influx from the Hazarajat enroute to the border.

Encashment Activity

Between July 1990 and 31 December 1991, 45,950 refugee families exchanged their ration cards for Rs 3300 and 300 kilos of wheat. Cumulative encashment figures for 1991 total 32,887. (See Figure 2.)

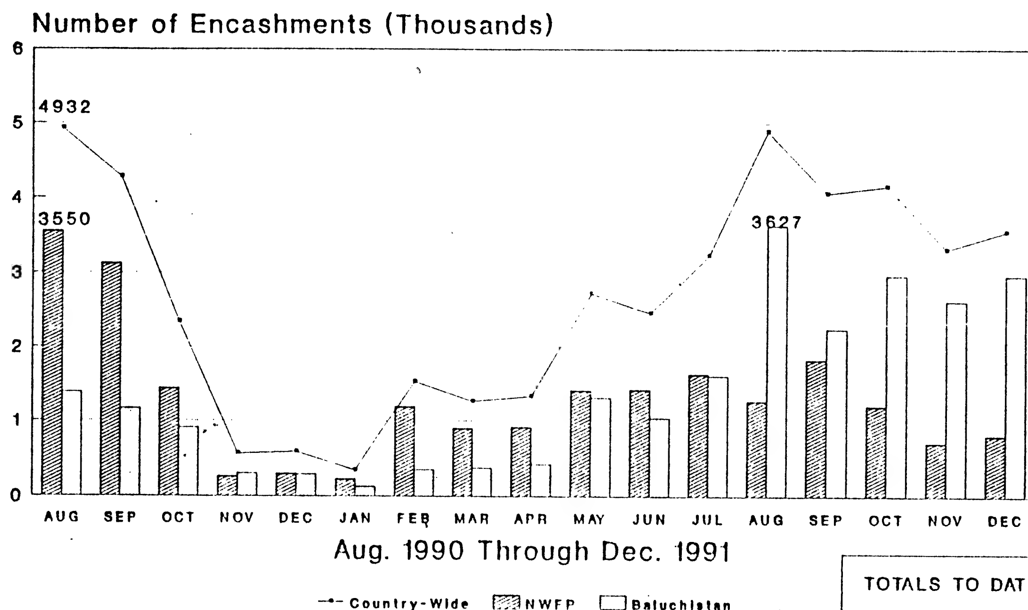


Figure 2

In a shift from patterns of past years, refugees from districts which produced the highest percentage of outflow in Nangarhar and Helmand are beginning to return in small, but increasing numbers. Other destinations with high encashment rates felt to represent genuine return include key districts in Baghlan and Kunduz in the north and Kandahar in the south. Given that UNHCR staff have felt that areas heavily depopulated represent special problems - ie., no one wants to be the first to go back - return to districts virtually deserted in the past should open up the possibility of more massive returns in the future, security concerns permitting.

Perhaps most significant of all, refugees are far more open at the encashment centers about their intentions than in past years. In the Northwest Frontier Province encashment centers, far fewer passbooks are being presented by intermediaries than were last year, which indicates that heads of households feel less need to be secretive about their plans to return home.

Heads of households have driven up to the front of the encashment centers in trucks loaded with household goods and openly discussed their travel plans, routes of return and destination inside Afghanistan with the encashment clerk while turning in their cards. Many families, however, make few pronouncements in camp about their intentions to return, concealing their departure by moving at night and telling neighbors that they are shifting to other camps or relocating to the cities of Pakistan.

The UNHCR encashment assistant at Hangu in NWFP maintained a register in which he listed the name and registration number of the card holder as well as the number of dependents. He also noted his impression of each refugee's intention regarding actual return to Afghanistan. Although a very imperfect sampling, UNHCR staff have been surprised this summer at the degree of candor shown by individual family members while encashing regarding their intended use of the encashment money.

Based on his 20 May through 14 November 1991 records, he determined that out of 943 encashments, 643 families (68%) were intending to return or had already returned, while 300 families (32%) were planning to remain in Pakistan. In June and July, the ratio was heavily in favor of those returning to Afghanistan.

Month	No. Returning	%	No. Staying	%
20 May-31 June	193	79%	52	21%
1 July-31 July	215	75%	73	25%
1 Aug-31 Aug	79	71%	33	29%
1 Sept-30 Sept	106	54%	92	46%
1 Oct-14 Nov	50	50%	50	50%

Interestingly enough, this ratio is the same as was found in the survey of dismantled houses in Palai Camp, Malakand Agency described under the "In-Camp Monitoring" section of this report, in which 67% of the families departed for Afghanistan while 33% remained in Pakistan. In the future, all encashment clerks will keep similar statistics based on their interviews with refugees encashing their passbooks.

Refugees' candor about their intentions in part results from diminishing opposition to return. When the Repatriation Grant program opened in July 1990, many Afghan political and religious leaders were strongly opposed to return as undercutting jihad. Although some refugee political and military leaders still voice political opposition to repatriation, most have refrained from further comment.

UNHCR monitoring at the major border crossings between Afghanistan and Pakistan, informal surveys in the camps, and refugee interviews at the encashment centers indicate a significant shift in attitudes about repatriation as well as a closer correlation between encashment and actual return than has previously been verifiable. Efforts to correlate in-camp monitoring information with data collected at the border crossings and at encashment centers are new; thus the numbers collected to date are quite small. Nonetheless, initial results provide the first hard evidence of linkage between encashment and actual return to Afghanistan.

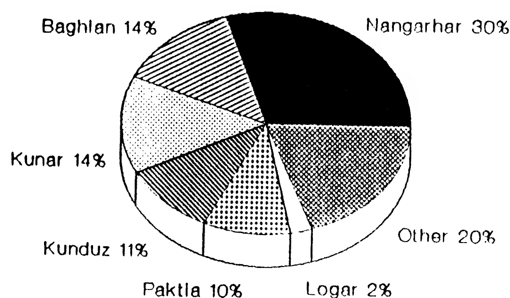
Border Monitoring

Pakistan Government border guards and/or Frontier Scouts were asked by UNHCR to record refugee family return to Afghanistan. UNHCR staff periodically collect the registers and remain in the area for up to a week at a time to check the accuracy of the frontier staff's record keeping as well as to interview a cross-section of refugees as they cross the border.

Problems with the system abound: government workers at the border have not always received clear and consistent instructions as to their responsibilities and do not always use the registers provided by UNHCR. Of the busiest crossings into Afghanistan, only Torkham (Khyber Agency) was consistently covered, providing 65% of the figures used in the table below. Record keeping at other key borders was sporadic at best, and many secondary crossings are unmanned altogether. When records were kept, numbers recorded reflect a lack of clarity as to how to identify a returning family. Several crucial border crossings in both NWFP and Balochistan were closed to UNHCR staff for critical periods of the summer due to security constraints. Thus the figures obtained are indicative only and do not show the true volume of refugee return into Afghanistan during 1991.

Nonetheless, monitoring at the major border crossings into Afghanistan tends to generally confirm information on destination given by heads of household at the encashment centers. The charts illustrated by figure 3 compare destinations given at Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) encashment centers from 19 April through 31 December 1991 with information recorded at major NWFP border crossings during the same period.

Refugee Destinations Given at NWFP Encashment Centers 19 April - 31 December 1991



Refugee Destinations Given at NWFP Border Crossings 19 April - 31 December 1991

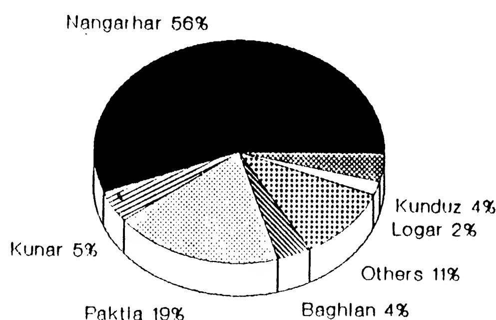


Figure 3

Correlation between encashments and observed border crossings for those destined for Nangarhar and Paktia was particularly strong: Between the dates in question, 3,169 cards were encashed for Nangarhar, the province which, during the same time period, 1,421 families crossing the border gave as their destination. One thousand forty five families gave Paktia as their destination at the encashment bank; during the same period 423 families registered for Paktia at the border. Since it is believed that most refugee families return without being counted at the border points, an observation rate equal to approximately 40 to 50% of encashment numbers is considered very significant.

Given the many gaps in coverage of border crossing points during 1991, the correlation between declared destinations at encashment points and observed border crossings is less strong for destinations other than Nangarhar and Paktia. Between the 19th of April and the 31st of December, 2,536 families representing 22,613 individuals were recorded by NWFP border guards as having crossed into Afghanistan. During the same period, 10,661 families representing some 63,966 individuals cashed in their cards at NWFP centers. Although observed border crossers were only one quarter of the number of families who encashed, the destinations given at both data collection points roughly correlate with the exception of Baghlan and Kunduz.

Similar comparisons from statistics gathered by UNHCR border monitoring staff in Balochistan Province are listed below. These estimates have been extrapolated from observations by UNHCR staff while in the field and the registers maintained by officials at Chaman and Chotu, two of the three major crossing points into southern Afghanistan. No register is kept at Badini, the main crossing point for the provinces of Zabul, Wardak, Ghazni and Urozgan, but information collected by UNHCR monitors was used to compile the comparison figures below.

A total of 1,660 families were interviewed by UNHCR monitoring staff in Balochistan at or en route to the border. An average daily crossing figure was computed for the days UNHCR staff were present at each location, and this number was projected over the six month period when repatriation activity was highest. An additional 35% was added to cover projected border crossings for the first (and less busy) six months of 1991. The same procedure was used to project destinations in Afghanistan based on the 1,660 interviews. The results of these extrapolations are as follows.

	Destinations Given by 1660 Returning Families at Border	Projected No. Families Crossing During 1991 for each Destination	% Breakdown Encashments by Destination
Kandahar	1108 families	4300 families (54%)	59%
Helmand	348 families	2300 families (29%)	27%
Other*	204 families	1400 families (17%)	14%
	Total	8000 families	

*Other: Zabul, Ghazni, Urozgan, Wardak

Figure 4

The projected estimate of 8,000 famiies returning from Balochistan in 1991 corresponds to approximately 56,000 returnees, based on an average observed family size of seven persons. The estimate corresponds well with observations by UNHCR and other UN and NGO staff on mission in the relevant provinces of Afghanistan.

REPATRIATION REPORT
AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN
ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES: 1991

Wendy Batson, Consultant
UNHCR/Islamabad
01 March 1992

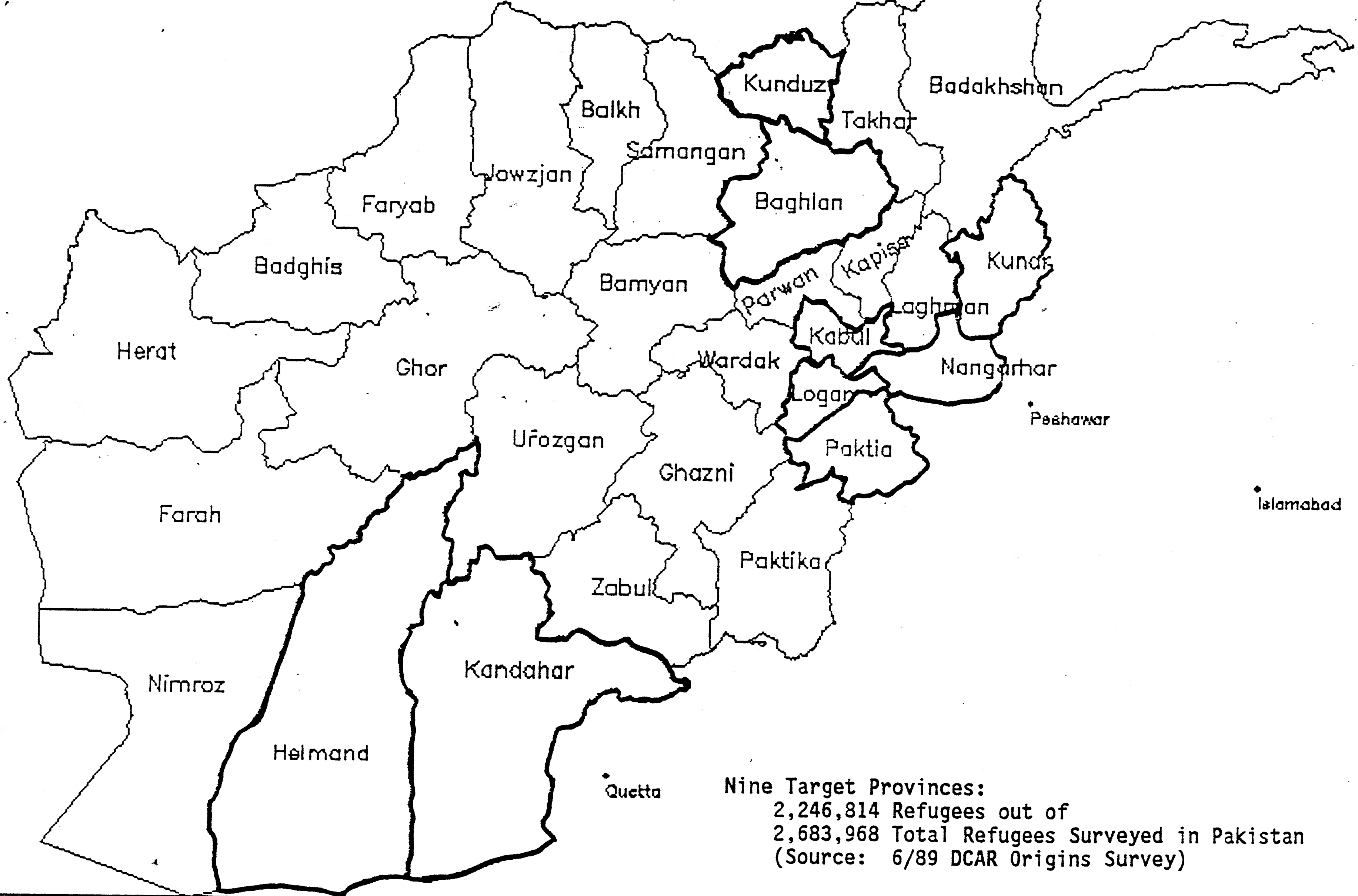

UNHCR TARGET PROVINCES
FOR TRACKING PAKISTAN-BASED REFUGEE RETURN
Kunduz
Badakhshan
Balkh
Takhar
Samangan
Jowzjan
Faryab
Baghlan
Badghis
Kapisa
Kunar
Bamyan
Parwan
Laghman
Herat
Ghor
Kabul
Wardak
Nangarhar
Logar
Peshawar
Urozgan
Paktia
Ghazni
Islamabad
Farah
Paktika
Zabul
Kandahar
Nimroz
Helmand
Quetta
Nine Target Provinces:
2,246,814 Refugees out of
2,683,968 Total Refugees Surveyed in Pakistan
(Source: 6/89 DCAR Origins Survey)

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